

Motivating the Army Acquisition Workforce

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Note to Readers

The Strategy Research Project (SRP) is an integral part of the Senior Service College Fellowship (SSCF) program for the Department of Defense (DoD) Acquisition Community at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, campus of Defense Acquisition University (DAU). Since the inception of the APG SSCF in 2009, the SRP implementation has emphasized the use of survey design and data collection. In January 2015, DoD Instruction 1100.13, *DoD Surveys*, was released and it included the requirement for DoD-level review of any “surveys requiring participation of personnel from more than one DoD or OSD component.” Also, the implementation instructions for AR 335-14, *Management Information Control System*, added significant new review requirements for surveys. Changes driven by these new policies were not assessed at DAU before the start of APG SSCF Academic Year 2016.

Implementing the new review requirements could add 8 to 12 weeks to the SRP timeline and would not guarantee approval of any survey; such impacts cannot be reasonably accommodated within the existing SRP structure. Thus, the decision was made in December 2015 to remove the survey distribution and data collection from the SRP program and instead emphasize research based on evidence found in existing literature. Because this change was implemented in the middle of the APG SSCF 2015–2016 curriculum, the reader may detect minor impacts to the authors’ research continuity that were beyond their ability to fully resolve.

Abstract

Many leaders and managers constantly deal with the problem of increasing their workforce's motivation to improve organizational achievement. This is no different within the Army Acquisition Workforce (AAW), a subset of Army employees that is in turn a subset of Department of Defense employees and of Federal employees as a whole. In order to provide AAW leaders and managers with insight about how to reach their workforce better, this study explores the motivation preferences of the AAW. The researcher leverages current discussion about motivation in general and public service motivation in particular, along with the results from the most recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, to study this unique public sector population. More specifically, this research study attempts to determine whether the AAW is primarily motivated by monetary incentives or by nonmonetary incentives.

This study analyzes and summarizes motivation theory and strategies through a literature review. The researcher also conducted secondary research using the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, integrating the results into two motivation models as a means to survey the AAW motivation level and assess its motivation preferences. While this research study did not conclusively prove the AAW motivation preferences, the research, analysis, and data provide insight to supervisors and leaders wishing to increase the AAW's motivation.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Background

Motivation has existed since the beginning of time. The earliest humans' need for food and safety motivated them to find innovative ways to hunt and build shelter. The Romans' desire to gain resources inspired them to explore and conquer much of the known world. Some Quakers' desire for religious freedom drove them to travel to an unknown New World. We are all similarly motivated every day. I am not suggesting we are motivated to hunt, conquer our neighbors, or sail across the ocean on a daily basis. But each day we are motivated, both intrinsically and extrinsically, to accomplish a number of tasks from the time we wake up until the time we go to bed. More specifically, we are motivated to carry out the duties of our jobs daily. Anderfuhren-Biget, Varone, Giaque, and Ritz (2010) defined work motivation as the “process by which the employee decides to work hard and sustain his/her efforts” (p. 4). Some of this motivation is intrinsic; it comes from within us as the personal need and desire to do a good job. We also experience extrinsic motivation by factors outside of ourselves such as our bosses, our co-workers, or the environment. These internal and external motivation factors provide us the drive needed to excel in our careers. Alternately, a lack of these critical factors may change the way we approach work, going from effectively completing a mission to simply collecting a paycheck.

Problem Statement

For the purposes of this paper, the goal of managers is to execute their mission by getting the most out of their employees; they can do this by inspiring employees to give effort they did not know they were capable of giving. Wiley (1997) asserts the manager's job “is to provide opportunities for people to be motivated to achieve” (p. 271). Perhaps the most common or well-

known form of motivating employees is through financial incentives like a pay raise or a cash bonus. However, managers have a number of other motivation methods at their disposal. These include, but are not limited to, the use of challenging assignments, the availability of training and career advancement, meaningful work, and nonmonetary recognition for accomplishments. While managers have all of these tools at their disposal, how can they be certain they are using the methods that match the preferences of their employees?

Purpose of This Study

This study explores the motivation preferences of the Army Acquisition Workforce (AAW), a subset of Army employees that is in turn a subset of Department of Defense employees and of Federal employees as a whole. The researcher leverages current discussion about motivation in general and public service motivation in particular, along with the results from the most recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, to study this unique public sector population.

Significance of This Research

This study adds to the dialogue by exploring what motivates the AAW. Much research exists on general motivation theory, motivation tactics and preferences, and even preferences of public sector employees. However, this research study identifies and studies a specific, unique population, and provides insight to AAW managers and senior leaders about what motivates their employees. Managers and senior leaders will be able to assess whether they are hitting the mark regarding motivation strategies and tactics, or whether they need to adjust their approach to motivating their employees. Additionally, if an adjustment is needed, the research identifies those areas in which to focus energy. If managers are not well versed in the preferred motivation approaches, those approaches are then developmental training opportunities for them.

Overview of the Research Methodology

This research paper explores the motivation preferences of the AAW. Before addressing specific questions, this study analyzes and summarizes motivation theory and tactics through a literature review. The researcher conducted secondary research using the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey as a means of surveying the AAW motivation level and assessing its motivation preferences.

It was expected that the research results would show that monetary incentives are not the primary motivator for the AAW. These results will contribute to the ongoing professional dialogue surrounding this topic in two ways. First, the results will offer a glimpse into the motivation preferences of a specific subset of public sector employees—the AAW. Second, in terms of practical application, the results will provide AAW supervisors and senior leaders an assessment of what motivates their workforce, and whether they are in line with those preferences. This assessment will allow supervisors and senior leaders to align their motivating behaviors to their employees' preferences to enhance workforce motivation.

Limitations

This research study is primarily limited by personnel and time. The author primarily worked alone in reviewing literature, analyzing the research results, and writing this paper. While Defense Acquisition University (DAU) project advisors and DAU and Army colleagues provided periodic guidance and suggestions, all of which were beneficial to this study, the core research team was one person. Additionally, the entirety of this research project—including the literature review, analysis, research proposal, and writing of this paper—was compressed into approximately 6 months.

This study is limited to secondary research. When originally planned, this research study was to include primary research in the form of a survey of AAW members. The survey would have assessed the workforce's motivation preferences and the supervisors' perception of those preferences. Conducting the primary research would have allowed the research to hone in specifically on the target population and ask questions exactly geared toward the research problem. However, due to Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Army policy surrounding surveys, the focus of the research study changed to literature-based only.

The inherent flaw in the research design is that the study is limited to those motivation factors prevalent in the research literature used in this study. With more personnel and time to complete the study, the literature review would have been expanded to include deeper dialogue on the different intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, as well as the possibility of finding additional motivators in the research. For example, the study would have further explored the concept and effect of public service itself as a motivator of public servants. Another flaw in the research design is its examination of motivators only. With more resources, the study would have expanded to analyze demotivating factors, those actions that reduce employee motivation, to form a more well-rounded study. As is, the scope of this study is limited to motivation factors.

Despite these limitations, this study adds to the dialogue by exploring the motivation preferences of the AAW.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter explores the research surrounding motivation, including a brief background of motivation theories and an analysis of the research on different internal and external motivation factors, including their potential benefits and drawbacks. The chapter goes on to address the potential drawbacks of motivation and the importance of asking employees what motivates them. Finally, the research looks at what research exists on motivating public service employees.

What Motivates Employees?

Many managers are searching for the magic motivational elixir, the one strategy or tactic that will provide their entire workforce with the motivation to complete their work. Unfortunately, such an elixir does not exist. Each employee is driven by a number of internal and external factors, and the mix and strength of these factors differs for each person. At a fundamental level, these differences can be attributed to whether people's actions result from fulfilling internal needs or responding to external motivating factors. This study will first examine two basic theories of motivation: needs theories and motive theories. Needs theories, such as Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, are heavily rooted in psychology; they hold that individuals are motivated to act by a series of need recognitions and the resulting satisfaction of these needs (Gawel, 1997). In other words, individuals act the way they do in order to satisfy an unmet need, such as safety or acceptance. Motive theories, popularized by Frederick Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory, categorize factors affecting people's work as either a hygiene factor or motivator. Hygiene factors are "job-related factors which can prevent dissatisfaction, but do not" motivate (Wiley, 1997, p. 265). For example, clean and safe working conditions are a hygiene factor. Motivators are "job-related factors that encourage growth" (Wiley, 1997, p. 265), such as

recognition and awards. This study will focus on motivators. However, no matter the theory you subscribe to, three things are constant: employees' motivation level is determined by a number of factors, the mix of factors is different for each person, and the impact of each factor is different for each person.

Consistently throughout the literature, two main motivators appear at or near the top of most lists: appreciation and monetary incentives. Other popular motivation tactics in the literature are interesting and challenging work assignments, availability of training and employee development, office atmosphere, promotion potential, feedback, and being included in decision making (Nelson, 1999; Wiley, 1997; Wziatek-Stasko & Lewicka, 2010). Some research has also delved into the public sector to examine what effect, if any, public service itself may have as a possible intrinsic motivator in public sector employees.

Wiley (1997) examined what motivates employees over 40 years of survey data, from 1946 to 1992. The same motivators were surveyed four different times over those years, and consistently “[f]ull appreciation of work done” was either the highest or second highest factor (first once, and second three times). This was the only factor that was as high as the top three in each of the four surveys. “Interesting work” ranked first twice, while “good wages” topped the list once (p. 268). While these surveys showed that motivation preferences of employees changed over time, appreciation clearly remained a top preference for employees. Table 1 displays the survey results through all four iterations.

Table 1 – Employee Motivators Over 40 Years

Motivator	1946	1980	1986	1992	Total	Average
Full appreciation of work done	1	2	2	2	7	1.75
Interesting work	6	1	1	5	13	3.25
Job security	4	4	4	3	15	3.75
Good wages	5	5	5	1	16	4.00
Feeling of being in on things	2	3	3	9	17	4.25
Promotion and growth in the organization	7	6	6	4	23	5.75
Personal or company loyalty to employees	8	8	8	6	30	7.50
Good working conditions	9	7	7	7	30	7.50
Sympathetic help with personal problems	3	9	10	10	32	8.00

Source: Adapted from Wiley, 1997, p. 268

Appreciation is an especially valuable motivator. It is simultaneously an effective motivator and an inexpensive and relatively easy-to-implement form of motivation. In its simplest form, it is saying “thank you” for a job well done. While there is no motivational magic elixir, Bragg (2000) asserted that “[a]ppreciation is the closest thing to a universal motivator” (p. 38). Nelson (1999) similarly observed that employees’ top motivator is to be “valued for a job well done” (p. 26). In underscoring the importance of showing appreciation, Wiley (1997) concluded that “[p]raise for a job well done is probably the most powerful, yet least costly and most underused, motivation tool” (p. 276). Wziatek-Stasko and Lewicka (2010) urged managers to leverage motivational tactics that required low investment while yielding high effectiveness (p. 49). Nelson (1999) added that a personal or written thank-you and public motivation approaches are very highly appreciated by employees (p. 27).

While appreciation is very effective, there is still a place for monetary and nonmonetary awards. Neckermann and Frey (2013) found “evidence that awards have a significant impact on motivation” and influence behavior (p. 73). Similarly, a U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO, 1979) report on federal incentives found nearly 60% of employees would “substantially improve

their performance if incentives were meaningful and properly administered” (p. ii). These awards are even more effective when announced publically, with the public announcement itself being worth the same as up to \$1,000 in cash (Neckermann & Frey, 2013, p. 73). Nelson (1999), too, urged managers to give awards in a public forum, saying it serves two purposes. The public award simultaneously rewards the awardee and alerts other employees to what type of performance gets rewarded.

In order to optimize effectiveness, an awards program should meet certain criteria. The award should be tied to both performance and its impact on organizational goals, be given publically, be timely, and be fairly distributed to those who deserve it; the award criteria should be clearly understood; and the award program should be regularly reviewed for effectiveness (Bragg, 2000; GAO, 1979, 2000; Neckermann and Frey, 2013; Nelson, 1999). According to the GAO (2000), the incentive program should be reviewed regularly to assess its effectiveness in motivating employees. An agency’s periodic self-assessment would afford them “the opportunity to determine the degree to which their current use of incentives motivates and rewards employee high performance” (p. 9). Many Federal agencies reported to the GAO that they do not regularly evaluate their programs, and the GAO points to the GAO Human Capital Self-Assessment Checklist as a tool to accomplish this (p. 3).

The Importance of Asking Employees

While awards can be effective, they have drawbacks, especially for public sector employees. In fact, research suggests that increasing external motivators such as money and awards can have a negative impacts on motivation. In his seminal research, Deci (1971) discovered the use of monetary rewards could actually decrease an individual’s intrinsic motivation, and that the decreased intrinsic motivation “appears to be more than just a temporary

phenomenon” (p. 114). Wright (2007) found that extrinsic rewards work only when linked to performance (p. 56), and Solomon (1986) had previously found that rewards are tied to performance to a “significantly higher degree” in private organizations than in public entities (p. 253). Further, public sector employees “are more inclined to disregard extrinsic [motivational] elements such as pay and monetary rewards” (Anderfuhren-Biget et al., 2010, p. 7), and these factors are “poor predictors of work motivation in the public sector” (p. 20). Bragg (2000) and the GAO (2000) warned that monetary awards are effective in the short-term only, and their sustained use transitions into an entitlement (Bragg, p. 39). The GAO (2000) also noted that monetary rewards for Federal employees can be ineffective because of their small size, the belief they are not linked to performance, the concern they are not distributed fairly, and the competition they create within teams.

With this mixed bag of effectiveness and ineffectiveness of motivational tactics, how does a manager know what motivates someone? The answer is simpler than you may think: ask them. Research supports the notion that managers’ perception of what motivates their employees differs from the employees’ actual motivation preferences. Nelson (1999) referred to research by Lawrence Lindahl in the 1940s, 1980s, and 1990s that demonstrated this gap between the managers’ perceptions and employees’ preferences. Managers must close this gap to create a motivating work environment. Nelson said they can do this by simply asking the employees for their preference, and then rewarding employees with tactics they value. According to the GAO (2000), since many Federal agencies do not regularly evaluate their incentive programs, they “may be offering their employees ‘incentives’ that could be discouraging rather than encouraging high performance” (p. 9).

Similarly, Wiley (1997) postulated that managers should explore “the attitudes that employees hold concerning factors that motivate them to work” in order to create a high-motivation environment (p. 266). According to Wiley, over “80 per cent of supervisors claim they frequently express appreciation to their subordinates, while less than 20 per cent of the employees report that their supervisors express appreciation more than occasionally” (p. 271). Clearly there is a dissonance. How else can an overwhelming number of supervisors claim to be doing something an underwhelming number of employees acknowledge them doing? Similar to Nelson’s advice above, Wiley (1997) urged managers not to assume the same factors that motivate them also motivate their employees.

Motivating Public Sector Employees

In addition to the extrinsic factors mentioned above, research also supports the notion that internal factors motivate employees, specifically public sector employees. The Public Service Motivation (PSM) construct holds that such employees are motivated by “higher order drives,” not simply extrinsic drivers (Anderfuhren-Biget et al., 2010, pp. 2–3). In their study, Anderfuhren-Biget et al. (2010) showed PSM not only positively influences work motivation, but it has a higher impact than monetary incentives, which were shown as poor predictors of motivation (pp. 18–20). Similarly, Wright (2007) found public employees were particularly motivated by their organization’s mission. This mission motivation increases the importance employees place on their work. While his study did find a positive correlation between extrinsic rewards and motivation, Wright (2007) concluded the intrinsic value or the organization’s mission provided a greater motivational impact (p. 60). So, while public sector employees are motivated by appreciation, monetary incentives, and other extrinsic factors like their private sector counterparts, they are also subject to intrinsic motivators like the PSM.

As a result of the National Defense Authorization Acts of 1996 and 1998, a number of AAW personnel are enrolled in the Department of Defense (DoD) Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project (AcqDemo) to “meet the needs of the Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L) Workforce” (AcqDemo Project Office, 2006, p. 5). The purpose of the AcqDemo program is “to demonstrate that the effectiveness of the AT&L Workforce could be further enhanced” increasing the flexibility of the personnel system and increasing management’s control and flexibility (p. 5). In other words, part of the purpose of the AcqDemo program is to increase the Defense Acquisition Workforce’s work motivation. Among the program’s eight interventions are seven related to increasing motivation, according to the previous literature. These boil down to increasing the manager’s ability to link pay and rewards to mission contribution, allow rapid advancement, link assignments to organizational mission, and increase training and development opportunities.

By all accounts the AcqDemo has been successful. The AcqDemo Project Office (2006) cited examples of the personnel system and its interventions improving workforce quality, increasing retention rates for high performers, and increasing workforce satisfaction (p. 6). As demonstrated in Table 2, the AcqDemo saw improvements in a number of dimensions of employee fairness, some of which affect motivation.

Table 2 – Perceived Fairness Questions, AcqDemo Participants’ Responses

Survey Question	1998	2003
I am satisfied with my chances for advancement	31%	45%
Supervisors are fair in recognizing individual contributions	46%	50%
Promotion opportunity—best qualified applicant is chosen	27%	35%
Competition for jobs is fair and open	27%	41%

Source: Adapted from AcqDemo Project Office, 2006

Although there is still much room for improvement, the AcqDemo program does show significant improvement in these areas. As a result of all of these improvements, one can conclude that the AcqDemo interventions have increased motivation of the Defense Acquisition Workforce. However, for the purposes of this study, the AcqDemo Project Office report falls short of answering the research questions. First, the AcqDemo includes employees across the entire DoD, not just the AAW. Do AAW employees feel differently than DoD employees as a whole? Second, the report does not identify which of the AcqDemo interventions have the greatest impact on employee motivation or performance improvement. Do one or more of these interventions have a greater impact on AAW members? Finally, the report does not address whether AAW managers are in tune with the factors that motivate their employees. Nonetheless, this report shows that linking pay and rewards to mission contribution, allowing rapid advancement, linking assignments to organizational missions, and increasing training and development opportunities can have a positive impact on increasing the motivation and performance of Defense Acquisition Workforce employees.

Summary

The dialogue surrounding motivation is well established and includes a number of factors affecting human behavior. Both appreciation and monetary incentives consistently appear in the research as top motivators, while a number of other factors—such as interesting and challenging work, employee development, office atmosphere, promotion potential, feedback, and inclusion in decision making—also drive employees to perform. Also, the literature supports the potential for dissonance between employees' motivation preferences and their managers' perception of those preferences. This research uses this dialogue as a springboard to further study the motivation preferences of the AAW.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

This chapter describes the proposed research methodology, including identification of the hypothesis, research design, and potential for bias and error.

Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis (H_0) for this research study is that the AAW is primarily motivated by monetary incentives. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) is that the AAW is not primarily motivated by monetary incentives.

Research Design

The research study is composed of two parts: a literature review and secondary research analysis. The literature review was primarily conducted using the Webster University library, specifically the Academic Search Complete, Education Resources Information Center, and Psychology databases. Additionally, Google Scholar was used to find additional sources not found in the Webster databases. The literature review focused on general motivation research and motivation research specific to the public service sector. The review did not uncover prior research specifically about the motivation preferences of, or effectiveness of motivators on, the AAW.

As previously mentioned, the original research study was to include primary survey research. The U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center offered to send the survey to the entire AAW. Soliciting the entire AAW would have allowed the study to reach a wide variety of acquisition career fields, asking questions pertinent to the hypotheses above (see Appendix A for a sample survey). However, the inability to execute the survey remains a limitation in this research study. This limitation was mitigated by using the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey as a basis to analyze the AAW motivation level and preferences.

As mentioned in the introduction, lack of personnel and time limited this research study's breadth and depth. For example, this study primarily focuses on motivational factors and does not delve into factors or actions that demotivate employees. These factors can likely be as strong as or stronger than those that motivate, but this study does not examine that evidence. Similarly, much more research exists in the motivation dialogue that is not addressed in this study's literature review. Additional time and personnel would have allowed the research to explore more academic sources and studies and to delve into demotivation factors and other aspects of motivation not covered in this study.

Bias and Error

Since the author is both a member of, and a supervisor in, the AAW, there is a potential for researcher bias, whereby the analysis would represent the author's perception and not an objective view of motivation preferences. This also serves as a threat to content validity since this bias could influence the selection of motivation factors to include in the analysis. This bias and threat to content validity was eliminated by basing the analysis on motivational factors from published research.

The research will be internally valid in that it will measure the study's variables of interest: the AAW motivation preferences. One threat to the internal validity is that there is no guarantee the DoD-level results from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey are representative of the AAW. Since the target population is a subset of DoD employees, this research treats those survey results as representative. This threat is considered to be low risk, and further mitigation of this threat would require a specific survey of the target population. The study is also externally valid, with implications for the greater Defense Acquisition Workforce and perhaps all DoD employees.

Finally, the research is expected to be reliable. Researchers with similar and different backgrounds would draw the same or similar conclusions after analyzing the available motivation research and analyzing the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results. Additionally, the analysis could be applied to any workforce population in the public or private sector, if a tool similar to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey existed for that population.

Summary

This study explores the motivation preferences of the AAW. A literature review laid the groundwork for the development of a secondary research analysis, which was conducted using the DoD results from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. All bias and threats to validity and reliability were mitigated by the researcher to the greatest extent possible.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Using the literature review as a springboard, this chapter analyzes the motivation level of the AAW against two models to determine whether we can glean the workforce's motivation preferences. The results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is used as workforce data and is analyzed in the context of two models: one deriving from this study's literature review, and the other from a recent Harvard-based study.

Collected Data

Without making a one-for-one comparison, researchers can extrapolate questions and results from the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), 2015) to evaluate whether DoD employees are being motivated today. A number of the survey's questions also touch on employees' satisfaction concerning the existence or prevalence of a number of motivators, such as a link between rewards and performance. Researchers can compare the level of motivation with these other survey questions to infer the workforce's motivation preferences. Since the AAW is a component of the Defense Acquisition Workforce, it is assumed the DoD viewpoints are representative of our target population's as well.

Table 3 – Selected DoD 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results

Question	Positive Responses
Pay raises depend on how well employees do their jobs.	21%
In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.	33%
Promotions in my work area are based on merit.	33%
How satisfied are you with your opportunity to get a better job in your organization?	34%
Creativity and innovation are rewarded.	39%
Awards in my work unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs.	40%
In my organization, senior leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.	42%
Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.	46%
How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?	47%
How satisfied are you with the information you receive from management on what's going on in your organization?	48%
My training needs are assessed.	52%
How satisfied are you with your involvement in decisions that affect your work?	53%
Senior leaders demonstrate support for Work/Life programs.	57%
Employees are recognized for providing high-quality products and services.	49%
Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your pay?	58%
I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization.	63%
Supervisors in my work area support employee development.	65%

I have trust and confidence in my supervisor.	67%
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	70%
My performance appraisal is a fair reflection of my performance.	73%
In the last six months, my supervisor has talked to me about my performance.	74%
I know what is expected of me on the job.	79%
My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues.	80%
My supervisor treats me with respect.	82%
I like the kind of work I do.	83%
I know how my work relates to the agency's goals and priorities.	83%
The work I do is important.	89%

Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Analysis

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results can be used to assess the climate in the AAW and can be extrapolated to assess how well managers and senior leaders are doing in certain areas affecting employee motivation. Workforce employees certainly see the importance of their jobs and the connection to their organization's mission, which research has shown positively affects work motivation. Additionally, respondents are generally satisfied with their performance evaluation and performance feedback, enjoy and understand their jobs, and feel their supervisors encourage employee development and allow a work-life balance (OPM, 2015).

On the other hand, many results of this survey are cause for concern. AAW employees do not feel appreciated for their contributions, are not satisfied with pay raises, do not feel empowered or motivated, do not feel awards are meaningful, and do not feel awards and promotions are decided in accordance with merit principles. Based on our previous literature

review, these results are alarming, and they likely have a negative impact on employee motivation (OPM, 2015).

Overall, the AAW does not see senior leaders generating high levels of motivation in the workforce, with only 42% of respondents answering positively to that question. In fact, if you look at the other side of the coin and list the survey items by percentage answering negatively, this item received the fourth highest negative response (33%) out of the 71 survey items (OPM, 2015).

In order to uncover what is driving this 42% rate, the researcher analyzed the survey results against two models. The first, the AAW Motivators Model, categorizes the survey items by motivators used in Wiley's study (1997), which were surveyed over 40 years to study changes in motivation. Additionally, the categories were adapted based on the research of Anderfuhren-Biget et al. (2010) and Wright (2007) in order to include a tie to organizational mission.

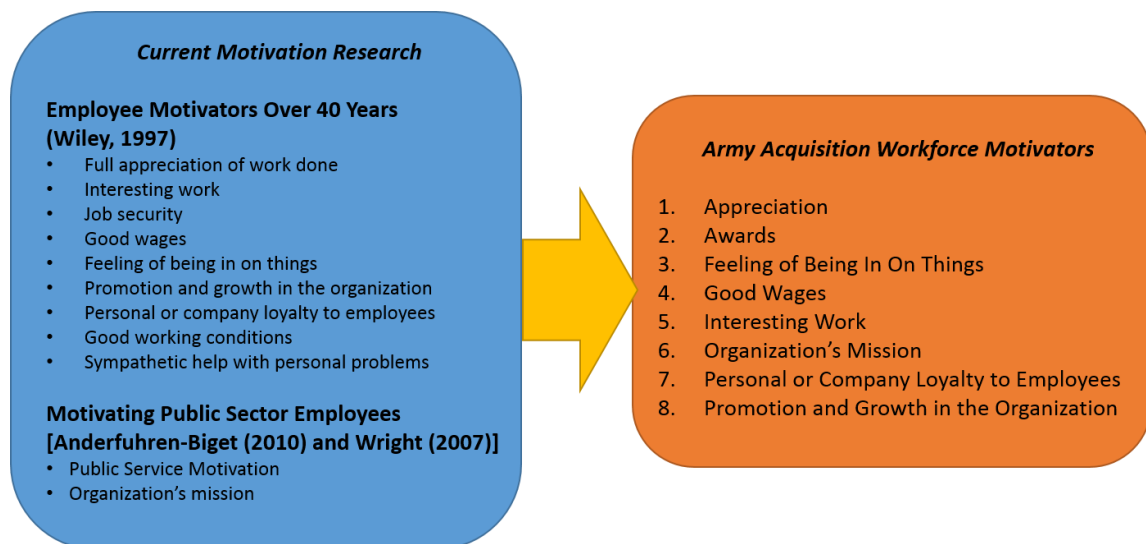
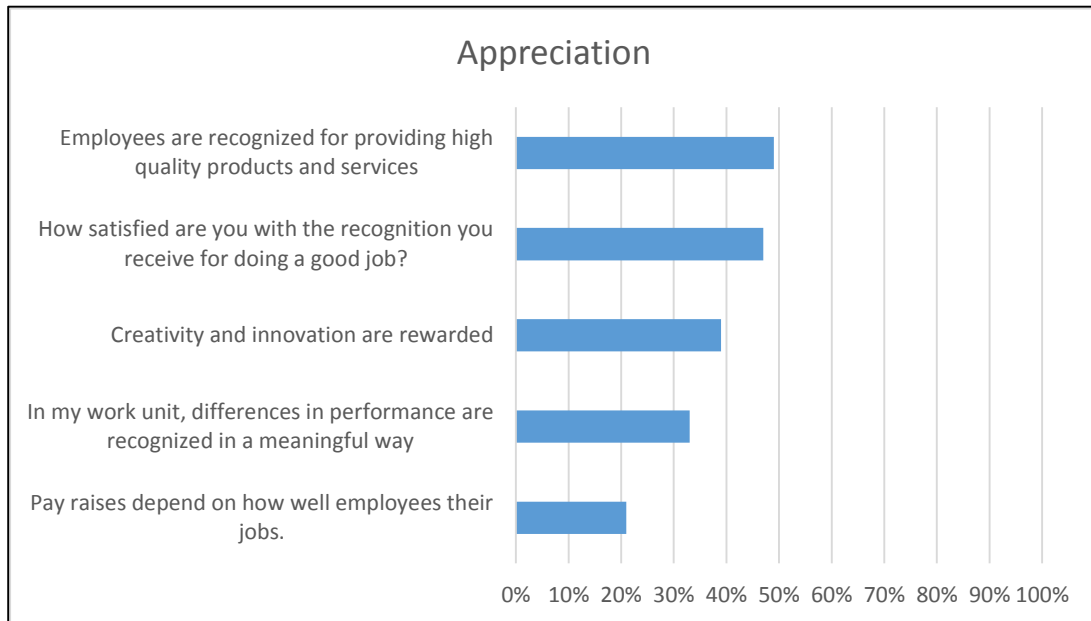


Figure 1 – Army Acquisition Workforce Motivator Model

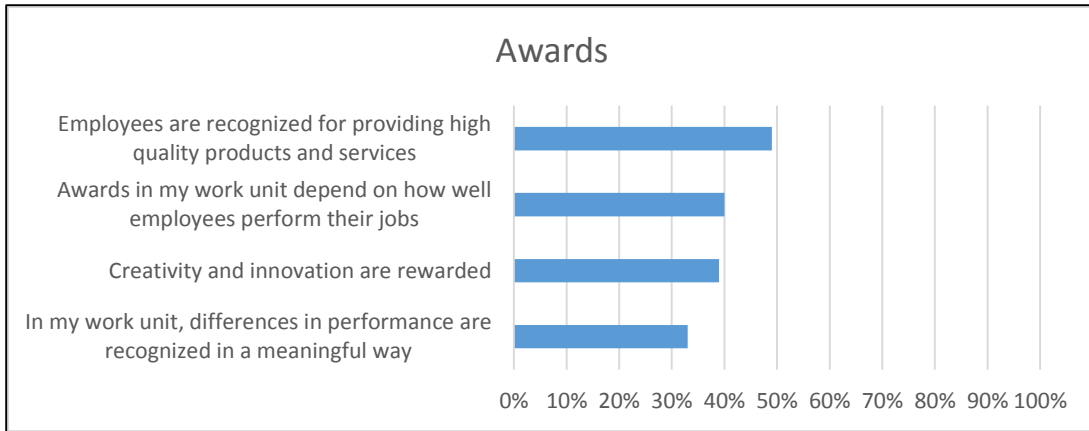
Using this model, the following figures categorize the selected Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey items into AAW Motivators. The percentage shown is the percent of positive response to each question.



Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Figure 2 – Appreciation (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

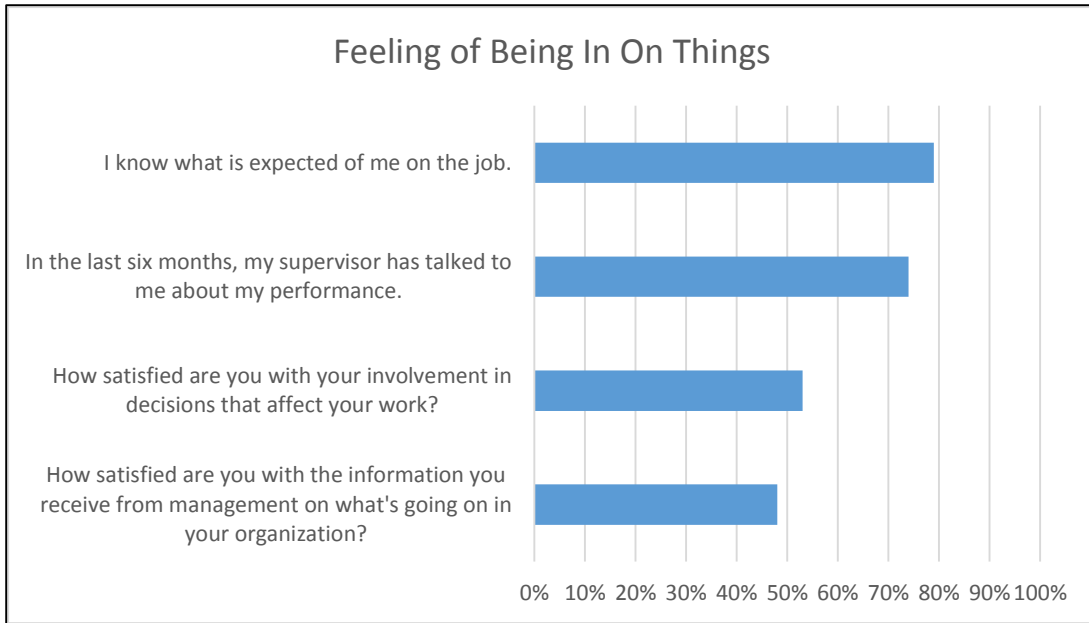
Figure 2 shows employees are not satisfied with the amount of appreciation shown to them by their organizations. The average positive response is merely 38%, with no one question receiving over 50% positive responses. This result is particularly alarming as appreciation is consistently seen as a top motivator in the research. Wiley (1997) found that “full appreciation of work done” was the top employee motivator across 40 years of motivation surveys (p. 268). Additionally, Bragg (2000) and Nelson (1999) agree appreciation is a top employee motivator. The U.S. Merit System Protection Board (MSPB, 2012) found that 83.9% of Federal employees find appreciation received to be an important variable in their desire to stay with their organization.



Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Figure 3 – Awards (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

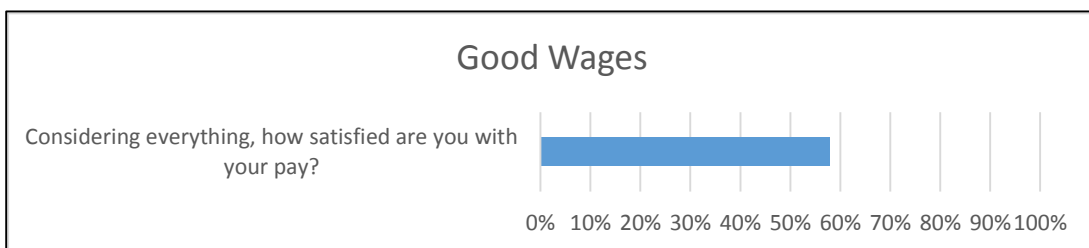
Figure 3 summarizes the responses to four employee viewpoint survey questions related to awards. These questions average a woeful 41% positive response rate, and all four are under a 50% positive response rate. Note there is no distinction in the questions between monetary and nonmonetary awards. The research shows there is a place for each of these, as both can be effective motivators. As indicated in the literature, awards serve most effectively as a motivator when they are “meaningful and properly administered” (GAO, 1979). Based on the survey results, neither of these conditions is prevalent. The MSPB (2012) found that 78.3% of Federal employees view awards and bonuses as an important motivator.



Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Figure 4 – Being in on Things (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

Figure 4 shows that employees generally feel as though they are “in on things,” with an average of 64% of responses being positive. Over half of respondents are satisfied with their involvement in decisions that affect their work. This is encouraging, as the MSPB (2012) found “being included in important discussions and decisions” is an important motivation factor to 82.1% of Federal employees.



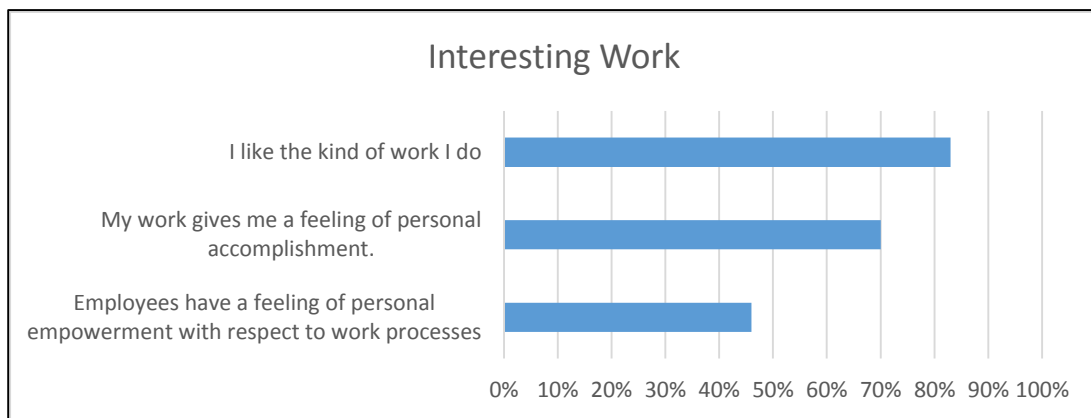
Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Figure 5 – Good Wages (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

Only one question on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey related to wages, and the employee response showed clear satisfaction with a 58% positive response rate (Figure 5).

Wages or salary alone did not make the MSPB (2012) top 11 motivators. However, good wages

was consistently one of the top five motivators in the 40-year study, finishing as the number one employee motivator in the 1992 study (Wiley, 1997, p. 268).



Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Figure 6 – Interesting Work (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

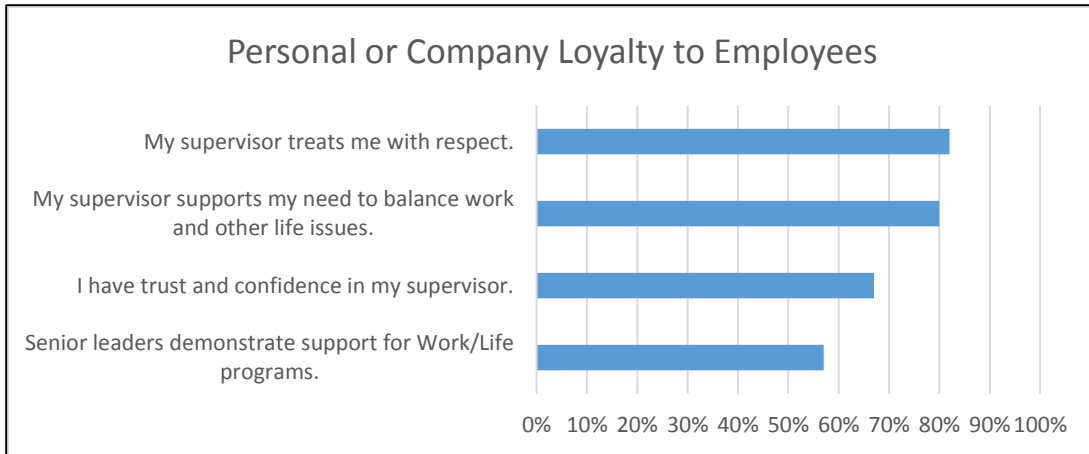
Employees find their work interesting, with the positive response to these three questions, summarized in Figure 6, averaging 66%. Of particular note, 83% of respondents like the kind of work they do. This bodes very well for AAW motivation, as both Wiley (1997) and the MSPB (2012) agree that interesting work is a crucial motivator. Over 40 years of research, interesting work came out as the number two overall motivator, having topped the employee survey results in two of the four surveys over time (Wiley, 1997). Similarly, having interesting work is the second-highest-rated motivator for Federal employees (MSPB, 2012). Clearly interesting work is a top employee motivator, and the 66% positive average in this category indicated the AAW is engaged in work they find interesting, helping boost their motivation.



Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Figure 7 – Organization’s Mission (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey contained only two questions relating to mission, but both scored very highly, making this the highest scoring category in this model. The two questions depicted in Figure 7 both surpassed an 80% positive response rate, with an average rate of 86%. This phenomenon is particularly interesting to our analysis of the target population’s motivation. Both Anderfuhren-Biget et al. (2010) and Wright (2007) concluded that a public organization employer’s mission and the employee’s connectedness to that mission are greater motivators than extrinsic rewards. Similarly, the MSPB (2012) reported “being able to serve the public” (e.g., PSM) as the fourth-highest Federal employee motivator. An agency’s mission and the employee’s tie to that mission is a key motivator, and AAW members see both the importance of that mission and the link from their jobs to the successful completion of the mission as factors that increase motivation.



Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Figure 8 – Loyalty (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

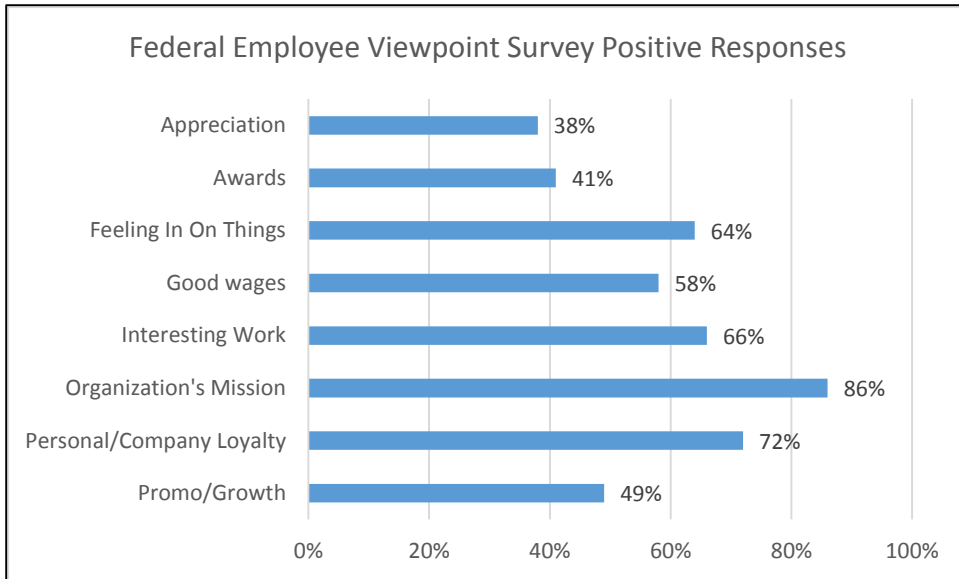
There was not as clear a connection to the loyalty motivator in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey as the other motivators. However, the overwhelmingly positive responses to the four questions in Figure 8, averaging 72%, demonstrate a feeling that supervisors and senior leaders are loyal to employees. According to Wiley (1997), loyalty to employees is the seventh-highest employee motivator. The closest motivator parallel in the MSPB (2012) report is to be forgiven for small mistakes. This is the report's second-lowest motivator, with a mere 61.2% of Federal employees saying this was an important motivator.



Source: *Adapted from OPM, 2015*

Figure 9 – Promotion and Growth (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

As Figure 9 demonstrates, the positive responses on the five employee viewpoint survey questions relating to promotion and growth run the gamut from 65% to 33% positive responses. Overall, this section of questions received an average of 49% positive responses. Opportunities for promotion, growth, and advancement appear throughout the literature as potential employee motivators. The MSBP (2012) found 80.9% of Federal employees are motivated by their opportunity of advancement, while promotion and growth in the organization is the sixth-highest overall motivator in Wiley's (1997) study, never finishing below number seven in 40 years of employee motivation research surveys. Of particular concern, the questions specifically addressing promotions within the organization each scored below 40%.



Source: Adapted from OPM, 2015

Figure 10 – All Motivators (Employee Viewpoint Positive Scores)

Figure 10 summarizes the analyzed Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey questions and answers into the eight primary motivators discussed in this study. There is a large range in these scores. Three motivators—appreciation, awards, and potential for promotion and growth—fell below 50% positive responses. Alternately, both organization’s mission and loyalty exceeded 70% positive responses. These aggregate scores can also be evaluated against the individual motivators’ importance in the literature and the 2012 MSPB study.

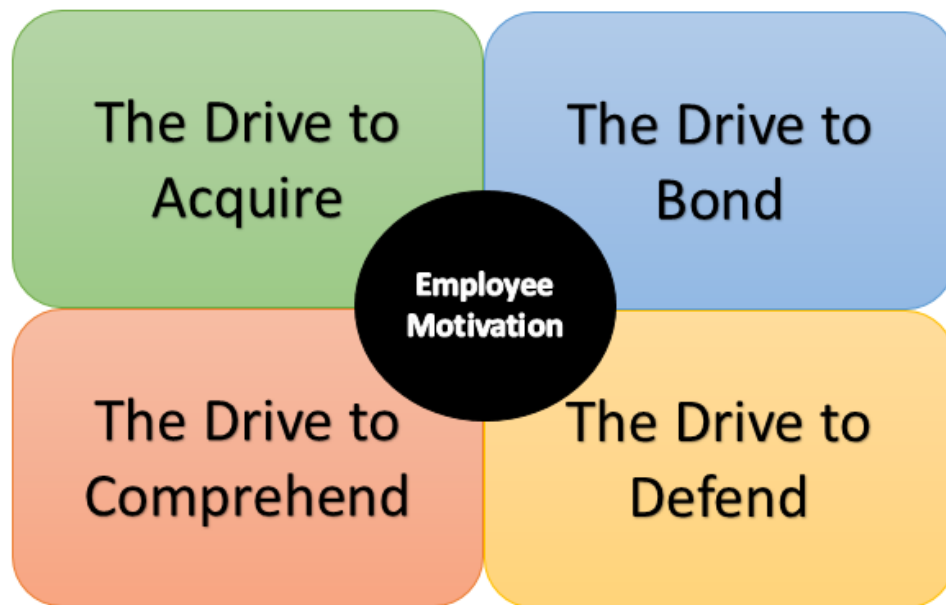
Army Acquisition Workforce Motivator	Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Positive Responses	Employee Motivators Over 40 Years of Research Ranks	2012 Merit Standards Protection Board Percent Important or Very Important Motivators
Appreciation	38%	1	83.9%
Awards	41%	1	78.3%
Feeling In On Things	64%	5	82.1%
Good Wages	58%	4	Not Rated
Interesting Work	66%	2	93.6%
Organization's Mission	86%	Not Rated	87.3%
Personal/Company Loyalty	72%	7	61.2%
Promotion/Growth	49%	6	80.9%

Figure 11 – All Motivators Cross-Referenced to Survey, Literature, and MSPB Study

This juxtaposition and analysis of workforce motivators, survey results, literature review results, and the MSPB report provides a number of insights (Figure 11). First, appreciation is both the lowest scoring motivator on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and among the most important motivators according to both the literature review and the MSPB study. Additionally, awards is in a similar predicament, although the difference between its perceived importance in the literature and in the MSPB report indicate that it may serve as more important to the general employment population than it does to the Federal workforce. Third, interesting work appears to be a universal high motivator, and it is encouraging that the AAW is generally positive in their current view towards that motivator. Finally, the opportunity for promotion and growth was a somewhat mediocre middle-of-the-pack motivator across both the literature and in the MSPB study. While there exists much room for improvement in this area of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, higher priority may be given to other, more highly perceived motivators.

Continuing the analysis, the AAW motivators and the results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey are mapped against a relatively new motivation model, developed by Nohria, Groysberg, and Lee (2008). Using this relatively simple model will identify any areas that may

be driving employee motivation, providing clues to which motivators are most preferred by the AAW. The researchers tapped into modern brain science to develop a model in which human behavior is guided by the satisfaction of four principal drives, depicted in Figure 12.



Source: Adapted from Nohria et al., 2008

Figure 12 – New Model of Employee Motivation

The *drive to acquire* describes our need to obtain limited resources (e.g., money). The *drive to bond* relates to our nature as pack animals, and asserts that we seek to connect with colleagues and organizations. The *drive to comprehend* speaks to our desire to understand the world around us, and translates in the workplace to the desire to make a “meaningful contribution.” Finally, the *drive to defend* derives from our natural tendency to defend ourselves from potential threats, real or perceived (Nohria et al., 2008).

The results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey are mapped against the New Model of Employee Motivation in Figure 13. The results show the average positive response in each AAW motivator category, and those numbers are averaged within each of the model’s four “drive” categories. Central to the model is the 42% rating, representing the percentage of

employees feeling senior leaders generate high levels of motivation in the workforce (OPM, 2015).

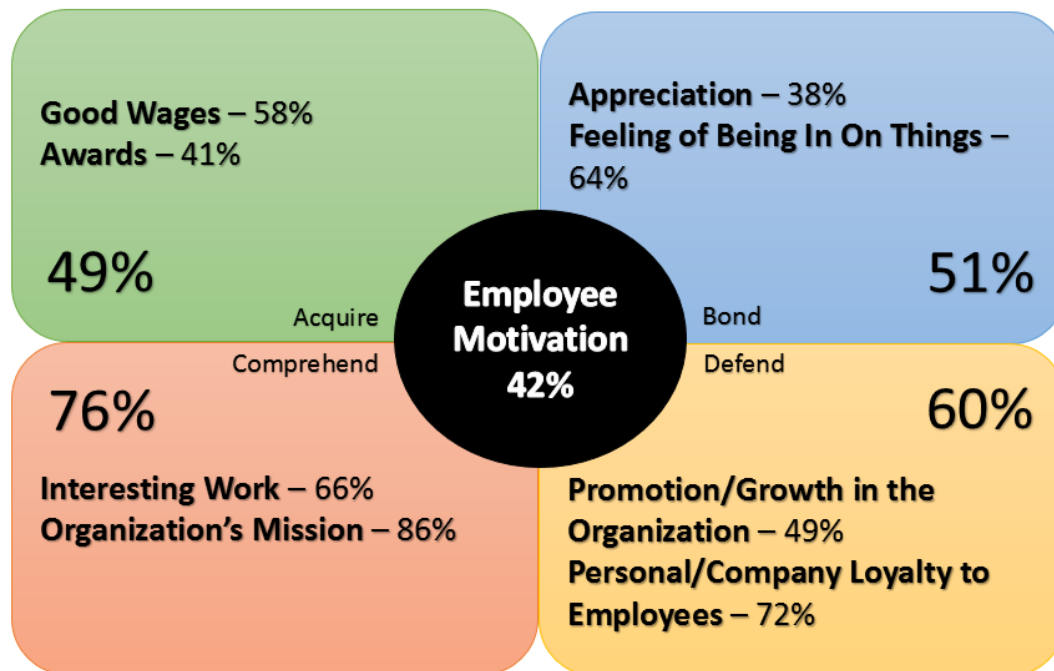


Figure 13 – Army Acquisition Workforce Motivation

The model shows the drive to comprehend and the drive to defend are contributing positively to the AAW's motivation. In fact, combining this analysis with the previous analysis on the relatively small importance of promotion and growth in the organization, one can conclude that the drive to defend may even contribute more than its 60% rating in the model. The trouble is in the top half of the model. The low ratings in awards and appreciation are driving down the overall ratings for the drive to acquire and the drive to bond, respectively. Additionally, as previously noted, appreciation is perhaps the most widespread high motivator across all of the literature research and the MSPB study. As a result, the 38% rating is likely more heavily weighted in the minds of employees, which would drag the drive to bond's overall 51% rating even lower. The takeaway from this analysis is twofold. First, the low perception of awards and appreciation in practice is driving down their respective drive quadrants, thus driving down

workforce motivation. At the same time, the model shows opportunity for improvement in all motivators impacting employee motivation.

Chapter 5 – Interpretation

A challenge for the supervisors and senior leaders of the AAW is to motivate disparate individuals to achieve the organizational mission. The data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey presented in the previous chapter illustrates this challenge: only 42% of the workforce feels their senior leaders generate a high level of motivation. This brings us to the crucial question of this research study: how can supervisors and senior leaders ensure the actions they take to motivate the AAW match the employees' motivation preferences?

Conclusions

In an attempt to answer this question, this research study hypothesized whether the is primarily motivated by monetary incentives (H_0) or by some other motivator (H_1). Unfortunately, the results of the study neither confirm nor refute the null hypothesis. The mediocre motivation level is driven by both monetary (awards) and nonmonetary (appreciation, promotion, and growth potential) incentives.

Recommendations

While this research study did not conclusively prove the AAW motivation preferences, the research and data provide insight to supervisors and leaders wishing to increase the workforce's motivation. Additional research may also shed light on specific AAW motivation preferences.

First things first: I recommend they keep doing what is working. Employees are generally satisfied with their feeling of being in on things, their wages, the challenge of their work, their connection to the mission, their organization's loyalty to them, and the potential for promotion and growth. In fact, as noted in the analysis, interesting work is one of the top employee motivators across all the research. Managers and senior leaders should keep reinforcing these

perceptions. Ignoring these strengths to chase improvements in other areas would be foolish; leaders should preserve what they do well to ensure the motivation levels to do not slip further. At the same time, I recommend that supervisors and senior leaders improve two areas of motivation.

First, supervisors and senior leaders should take action to make the workforce feel more appreciated. Appreciation can be easily administered, and it is inexpensive. It is as easy as saying “thank you” for a task completed or a job well done. However, less than half of employees feel adequately recognized for good work. I posit that many supervisors and leaders are trying to show their employees appreciation, but in a manner inconsistent with the employees’ preferences. Consistent with the literature, I recommend that supervisors and senior leaders engage in dialogue with their workforce concerning what forms of appreciation the employees prefer. Some may prefer a quiet thanks, while other may like to be recognized in front of their peers. Everyone is different. The supervisors and senior leaders must understand what their employees prefer so they can be sure to adequately recognize their contributions.

This recognition leads to the second area of improvement: awards. I recommend that supervisors and senior leaders improve their award programs. The workforce does not feel awards are used to recognize superior work. Rhetorically, what are the awards rewarding if not superior work? As discussed in the literature review, I recommend that awards programs be reviewed regularly, at least every three years, to ensure that supervisors, leaders, and the organization are objectively giving awards to the workforce as a result of greater-than-expected performance or to reinforce desired behavior. This regular review should include both monetary and nonmonetary awards, and should also include the search for and consideration of adding new

awards to the organization's award program. Failure to do so not only cheapens the award, it detracts from its motivational value.

Efforts to improve these two areas will likely improve the overall motivation in the AAW. However, the study does not offer an idea as to which area should be prioritized, or whether supervisors and leaders should focus on monetary or nonmonetary incentives to show appreciation and award employees. While the correct answer is likely that all have to be implemented and improved, further research on this topic may shed additional light on the motivation preferences of the AAW, allowing supervisors and senior leaders to focus their efforts on those motivators with the greatest potential for impact. I recommend follow-up research directly querying the AAW and their supervisors to gauge the workforce's motivation preferences and the supervisors' perceptions of these preferences. A sample survey developed as part of this research is included as the Appendix. Primary research of this type would serve three purposes. First, the results would offer a glimpse into the motivation preferences of the AAW. Second, the results will advance the dialogue related to the congruity or dissonance between supervisors' perceptions of their employee's motivation preferences and the employees' actual preferences. Finally, in terms of practical application, the results will provide AAW supervisors and senior leaders an assessment of what motivates their workforce, and whether they are in line with those preferences. This assessment will allow supervisors and senior leaders to align their motivating behaviors to their employees' preferences to enhance workforce motivation.

Limitations of the Study

This research study was primarily limited by the restriction to only use secondary data sources. As a result, the AAW was not directly surveyed to test the research hypothesis, allowing for the possibility of some dissonance between the findings in this study and the actual AAW

perceptions. The aforementioned survey of the AAW would clear up any dissonance. However, since the data was pulled from the DoD's results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, this study and its conclusions can be generalized across the entire DoD workforce. While there are organization-to-organization differences, the results, analysis, and conclusions would be applicable across all of DoD. Similar to the recommendation above, the survey in the Appendix could be used by any DoD component or other Federal organization in order to gain a deeper understanding of the motivation preferences of their workforce.

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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

AAWArmy Acquisition Workforce

AcqDemoDepartment of Defense (DOD) Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel
Demonstration Project

APG.....Aberdeen Proving Ground

AT&L.....Acquisition, Technology and Logistics

DAUDefense Acquisition University

DoD.....Department of Defense

GAOGeneral Accounting Office

H_0 null hypothesis

H_1 alternate hypothesis

MSPBU.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

OPM.....Office of Personnel Management

PSMpublic service motivation

Appendix – Survey Instrument

1) Rank order the following factors from 1-11, with 1 being the factor that provides you the most motivation, and 11 being the factor that provides you the least amount of motivation. (Rank order... *is that possible?*)

- Feeling of being in on things
- Full appreciation of work done
- Good wages
- Interesting work
- Job security
- Monetary awards (performance award, on-the-spot-award, time off award, etc.)
- My organization's commitment to training to help me grow in my job and career
- My organization's mission
- Non-monetary awards (certificate of appreciation, command coin, etc.)
- Personal or company loyalty to employees
- Promotion and growth in the organization

2) Can you share one way you were once motivated to do your job that stands out above all others? (Optional) (*open ended text box*)

- _____

3) Select your primary Acquisition Career Field: (*Choice – Single answer*)

(Drop Down)

- Business – Cost Estimating
- Business – Financial Management
- Contracting
- Engineering
- Facilities Engineering
- Industrial/Contract Property Management
- Information Technology
- Life Cycle Logistics
- Production, Quality and Manufacturing
- Program Management
- Purchasing
- Science and Technology Manager
- Test and Evaluation

4) Years of Acquisition Experience? (*Choice – Single answer*)

- 5 or fewer years
- 6-15 years
- 16-25 years
- 26 or more years

5) What is your pay grade or rank (or equivalency)? (*Choice – Single answer*)

- GS-7/8
- G-9/10/11/12 / CAPT
- NCO
- GS-13 / MAJ

- GS-14 / LTC
- GS-15 / COL
- SES / GO

6) Are you currently military or civilian? (*Choice – Single answer*)

- Civilian
- Military

7) Have you ever served in the military (Active, Reserves, or National Guard)? (*Choice – Single answer*)

- Yes
- No

8) What is your age? (*Choice – Single answer*)

- Under 36 years old
- 36 to 50 years old
- Over 50 years old

9) What is your gender? (*Choice – Single answer*)

- Female
- Male

10) Are you a supervisor? (*Choice – Single answer*)

Yes

No

(ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION SHOULD TAKE THEM TO TWO DIFFERENT TRACKS. IF “NO,” SURVEY ENDS. IF “YES,” CONTINUES TO QUESTIONS BELOW.)

11) Rank order the following factors from 1-11, with 1 being the factor you believe provides your employees the most motivation, and 11 being the factor you believe provides your employees the least amount of motivation. (Rank order...is that possible?)

- Feeling of being in on things
- Full appreciation of work done
- Good wages
- Interesting work
- Job security
- Monetary awards (performance award, on-the-spot-award, time off award, etc.)
- My organization's commitment to training to help me grow in my job and career
- My organization's mission
- Non-monetary awards (certificate of appreciation, command coin, etc.)
- Personal or company loyalty to employees
- Promotion and growth in the organization

12) In general, do you feel your employees are motivated to work? (*Choice – Single answer*)

- Highly Motivated
- Somewhat Motivated

- Barely Motivated
- Definitely Not Motivated

13) Have you received training on motivating employees?

- Yes
- No

14) Do you regularly assess (at least once per year) the effectiveness of your incentive program?

- Yes
- No

15) Can you share one unique and effective way you motivate your employees that stands out above all others? (Optional) (*open ended text box*)

End of Survey

Author Note

Nicholaus Saacks is a student in the Defense Acquisition University Senior Service College Fellowship (SSCF) Program at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

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